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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ISAIAS SPEAKS ON BORDER AND ON REGION

11. Summary: In a speech given August 24 to students in the northern Eritrean town of Nakfa, President Isaias continued to blame the US for lack of progress on border demarcation and insisted that Eritrea will find its own solution to the impasse. In his standard diatribe against the Ethiopian TPLF regime, he referred to Ethiopia's involvement with Somalia, and contended that Ethiopia is using Somalia to detract attention from Ethiopia's internal conflicts. He applauded Eritrea's "good neighbor" approach to foreign policy and claimed responsibility for promoting peace and stability in the region. For evidence of the success of this policy, Isaias pointed at recent progress towards peace in Sudan and Somalia. End Summary.

12. Comment: President Isaias was entirely predictable in his speech. He blamed external forces, namely the US, for lack of progress on the border, with no acknowledgement of efforts undertaken by the international community to progress toward demarcation. In addition, President Isaias continues to see himself as a player in the region, taking credit for success in Sudan. His claim of "progress toward peace" in Somalia is somewhat confusing given the situation reported on the ground there. Perhaps by promoting this role in Somalia, he is acknowledging Eritrean involvement on the ground. End Comment.

13. English translation of speech summary from the Government of Eritrea's official website, [www.shabait.com](http://www.shabait.com) follows below.

Begin text:

President Isaias Afwerki said that Eritrea is currently on a strong footing in the economic, political, social and security domains. He made the remarks in a briefing he gave yesterday at the School of Social Sciences in Nakfa on the prevailing situation, present challenges and prospects".

Stating that these achievements were made possible thanks to the strategies adopted and implemented over the past eight years, the President stated that the action program for economic development and the investment made are now in a reliable stage. He further elaborated that our capacity to meet any challenges has reached the highest stage.

On the border issue, President Isaias explained that no progress has been made due to complications created by external forces, especially the US Administration and that time and history would provide their own answers. President Isaias went on to assert that Eritrea would bring about a reliable and guaranteed solution to this problem in which future generations would lead a secure life.

Regarding political developments in Ethiopia vis-?-vis its impact on Eritrea's internal situation, the President noted that the TPLF regime has ceased to be a legal political force and has subsequently turned into a mercenary clique. In this connection, he pointed out that it is no more possible to use Eritrea as a means of conducting agitation and sacrificial lamb in Ethiopia.

With regard to the situation in Somalia, The TPLF regime is presently resorting to futile maneuvers alleging that "terrorism prevails in that country" and that it "poses a threat to Ethiopia," in a bid to divert the attention of the Ethiopian people from the internal crisis and weaken the popular uprising. In this respect, President Isaias noted that such attempts on the part of the regime reflect the acute desperation it is in, as well as a vivid demonstration of its ultimate doom.

Explaining that Eritrea's diplomatic strategy, being a continuation of internal strategy namely fostering good-neighborliness characterized by peace and stability, President Isaias underlined that this country has been exerting relentless efforts to promote peace and stability in the region. He further noted that these unrelenting endeavors have already borne fruitful outcome and cited the peace progress in Sudan and Somalia, as well as developments in Eritrea's relations with neighboring countries.

President Isaias also gave extensive briefings to questions from the 5th graduating batch of the School of Social Sciences on the objective situation in the Homeland. End Text.

McIntyre